The University’s emergency information line, 898-MELT, can tell you if Penn is closing early, opening late, or not opening at all in response to ice or snow storms, power outages, and other disasters. But what if you’re at home and have work to do that requires access to information or colleagues?

The PennNet modem pool, 898-0834, may be the answer. Via a personal computer, modem, and phone line at home, you can access the University’s library resources, PennInfo and other local information systems, electronic mail and NetNews discussion groups, UMIS and other administrative systems, as well as the resources of the worldwide Internet. To access PennNet from home, however, you must be prepared—especially in an emergency.

The following information on remote access to PennNet is intended primarily for faculty, students, and “non-essential” staff. According to the Human Resources policy on Emergency Closing (11/01/93), “staffs who are designated as ‘essential’ are expected to remain at work if the closing occurs during their regular work schedule, or to report to work if the closing announcement is made before their regular work schedule begins.”

**Accessing PennNet from home**

To access PennNet from home, you will need the following:

- A personal computer, such as an IBM PC or compatible, or an Apple Macintosh (or a “dumb” terminal, although these are increasingly rare).
- Communications software to provide “terminal emulation” for the computer, such as ProComm for PCs or MicroPhone for Macs.
- A modem, cabled between the computer (or terminal) and your phone line, to convert the computer’s digital signals to the analog signals used for telephony. The modem now recommended for compatibility with the modem pool is the U.S. Robotics model (v.32bis, or 14,400 bits per second data transmission; V.42 error correction; V.42bis data compression), available at the Computer Connection for around $150.
- Appropriate configuration of the communications software (8 data bits, 1 stop bit, and no parity) and modem.
- A Network ID and password, available at no cost to all faculty, students, and staff, via PENNcard-swipe stations at the ID Center, 3401 Walnut; SEAS CETS (Moore 169); Biomedical Library; and the Computing Resource Center on Locust Walk.

This much would enable you to access PennLIN, the online library resources; PennInfo, Penn’s Gopher, and Penn’s World-Wide Web home page; and hundreds of remote library and other databases accessible via the Telnet (remote login) command.

For personal communication, you also need a userID and password on one of the University’s electronic mail systems. E-mail is provided for all students and many faculty and staff. If your School or department does not provide e-mail, contact DCCS (898-8171) to set up an account. Most e-mail services also include access to News, an international bulletin board system that includes many Penn-only discussion groups.

**An ounce of preparation**

Don’t assume that hardware and software in shrink-wrapped boxes will work in an emergency! Everything must be tested in advance.

- Do you have current documentation at home? In addition to manuals for software and hardware, pick up *PennNet Passport* at Wharton Repro or The Book Store ($4).
• Do you have the right cable fittings and lengths from computer to modem, and from modem to phone outlet? Some computers, especially laptops, have internal modems, so only a phone cable is needed. Hard-wired telephone cables need to be updated to the modular jacks.

• Have you checked communications software settings? Most software can store the modem pool number and dial automatically; you can defeat call-waiting by preceding the number with *70 (e.g., *70-898-0834).

• Do you remember your Network ID and password?

• Is your University ID number—required for access to the Library’s journal databases (ABI/Inform, MEDLINE, Current Contents, et al.)—still valid in the Library’s database? If not, call Van Pelt Reference (898-7555). Also, be sure your PENNcard has not expired.

• You can use e-mail to transmit spreadsheets and formatted documents, but only if you understand the procedures and limitations.

• Do you have paper and ink cartridges/laser toner for your printer?

Other caveats

A pool of 300 modems is a modest number for such a large and computer-literate university. Please limit casual and recreational use of the network during peak times, including evenings from 7 PM to 1 AM and during any emergency closings.

If your on-campus PennNet connection is via Ethernet/IP, you may prefer to connect to PennNet via SLIP (Serial Line Internet Protocol) or PPP (Point-to-Point Protocol) in order to use the same software you use at the office. If so, you will need not only the applications software (Eudora, Mosaic, et al.) but also the SLIP or PPP and TCP “stack” appropriate for your computer; see PennInfo (keyword SLIP or PPP).

If you bring your office laptop computer home, it may need to be reconfigured to access PennNet from home.

The central modem pool does not currently provide access to departmental local area network (typically AppleShare or Novell) file servers. If you require remote access to software or documents stored on such servers, check with your departmental computing administrator.

Although it’s a good idea to have a Faculty-Staff Directory at home, information in an annual publication is inevitably dated. Your department should distribute updates of office direct lines and home numbers for any staff needed in emergencies.

Many e-mail addresses in the Faculty-Staff Directory are also outdated. For more current addresses, telnet to whois, Penn’s online directory. If your own e-mail address is incorrect, telnet to whois; login as update; enter your NetID and password; and make the corrections.

Many high-speed modems also let you use your computer to send and receive faxes. Again, be sure to test the settings, software, and procedures in advance.

For network assistance or to report problems, call the PennNet Help Line, 898-8171, or the CRC, 898-9085.

If the power goes out

During a University power outage, most computing and network services will either abort precipitously or be shut down gracefully (depending on availability of battery or generator backup). Saving work frequently and keeping current backups could avert a disaster. Also, multi-line telephone sets at Penn require power to operate, although single-line and fax phones work without power.

If the power goes off in your home, you may have more urgent problems than reading your e-mail. In addition to batteries for flashlights and radios, dry firewood, and a food supply, be sure that at least one telephone set in your house or car will operate without power (most plain sets will; most home cordless sets won’t). But if you have a battery-operated laptop and a working phone line, you could keep working through a power outage at home.

If power is out both at Penn and at home—and you have not been designated as “essential”—then settle in with family and friends and let the work go ‘til tomorrow. It will most assuredly be waiting for you.

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